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Managing Stress

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Managing Stress
1st edition
© 2010 MTD Training & bookboon.com
ISBN 978-87-7681-658-2

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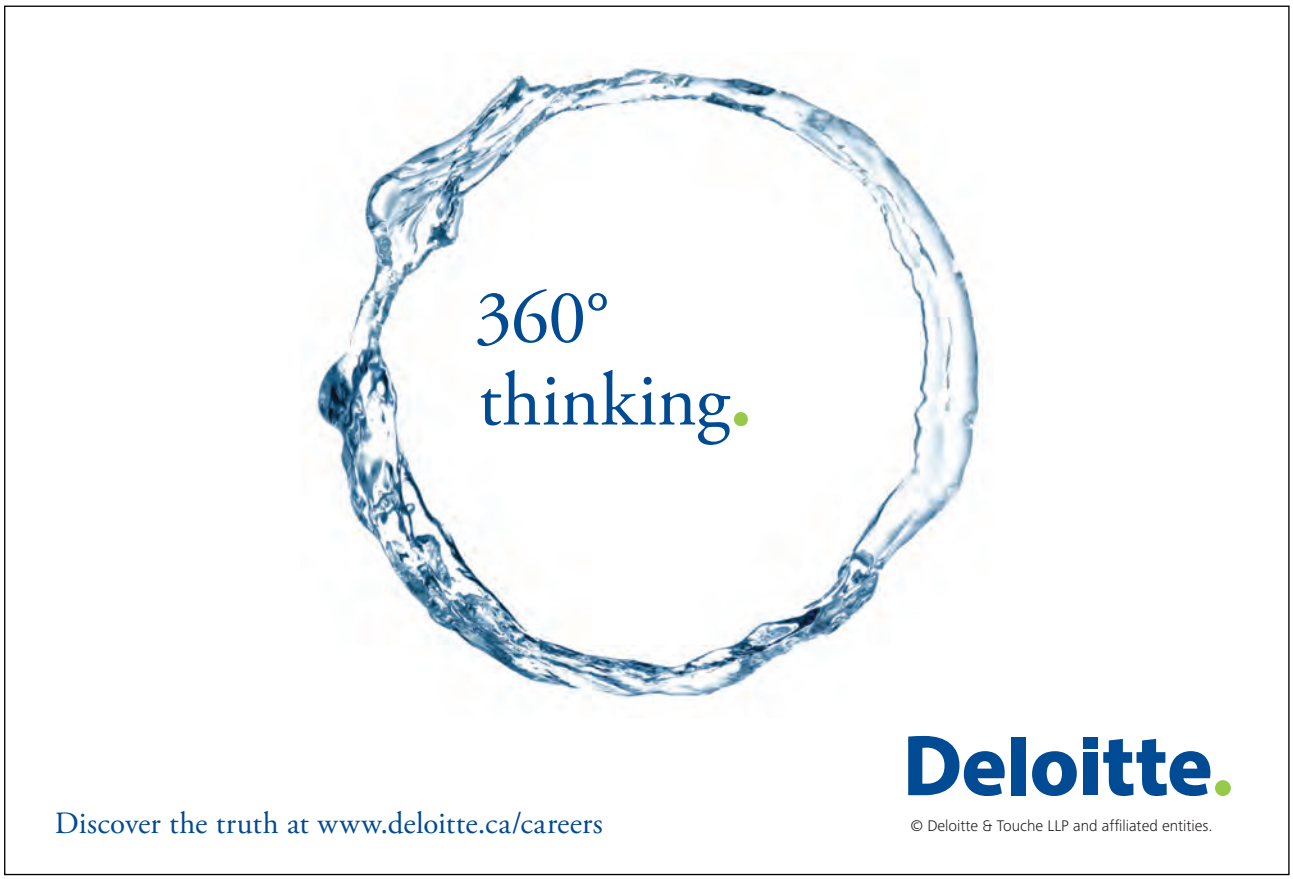

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Preface

I think all of us have to work under a lot more pressure nowadays that at anytime in history.

Expectations are higher than ever before and the need to do "more" with "less" is a given. Our family lives are also frantic. Add all of this together and it can caused us to be stressed and more anxious.

In this textbook, you'll be given information, techniques and strategies to manage your stress levels. We may not be able to control the events that happen to us but we can certainly manage the meaning and the impact that they have upon us.

Sean McPheat, the Founder and Managing Director of management development specialists, MTD Training is the author of this publication. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He's been featured in over 250 different publications as a thought leader within the management development and training industry.

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1 Introduction

For workers around the globe, stress on the job can be a challenge. There is already a certain level of stress in our lives outside of work and then we encounter even more stress arising from the pressures we face on the job. In times of a poor economy, these stress levels tend to rise even higher. As layoffs and cutbacks impact our employment, salary, or benefits, all of us will experience additional stress. The increase in stress and how well we manage it can be the difference between succeeding or failing at our jobs.

As layoffs and cutbacks impact our employment, salary, or benefits, all of us will experience additional stress. How we manage it can be the difference between succeeding or failing at our jobs.

While some stress is motivational, too much stress is detrimental to our health – and to the workplace. Beyond the point where we can effectively manage stress, there are physical, mental, and emotional results of excessive stress. Without effective stress management, the problem tends to increase in a snowball effect until absenteeism, disability, injury on the job, poor communication skills, and poor relationships at work can result. In this ebook we'll be looking at what causes stress in the workplace, what the impact of that stress can be, and what we can do in order to mediate the negative impact of stress on our lives and in the workplace.

Without effective stress management, the result can be absenteeism, disability, injury on the job, poor communication, and poor work relationships.

1.1 Why People Experience Stress

Stress is a natural, physical response to our perceptions of a stimulus. It has an evolutionary purpose: our need to protect ourselves and the innate 'flight or fight' aspect of our nervous system. When we were battling for survival, stress is what released the adrenaline that let us fight. So although most of us don't have to battle our way into the office each morning, the response to stimuli and the stress that results still exist.

Stress has an evolutionary purpose: the need to protect ourselves through the innate 'fight or flight' aspect of our nervous system.

That stimulus could be something physical, such as stubbing your toe, or emotional, such as the fear of losing your job or being embarrassed in the workplace. But not all sources of stress are negative stimuli. Some sources of stress are actually happy events. For example, getting promoted into a new position is a positive event, but it can add pressure to increase your work hours or the quality of your work, resulting in additional stress.

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There are three main categories that cause stress in our lives:

- Lack of Needs:
  - Physiological
  - Safety
  - Belonging
  - Ego or Status
  - Self-Actualization

- Organizational:
  - Physical environment
  - Role-related
  - Relationships
  - Changes in the organization

- Life:
  - Personal changes
  - Personal trauma

When your basic needs as a human being are not met, you are bound to experience stress. For example, if you become homeless, become involved in an abusive relationship, or don't have a support system in place, you will experience stress. If the organization of your workplace is physically uncomfortable, your job becomes more demanding, your boss and you don't get along, or the organization itself changes, stress is sure to be a result. Then in your own life, any major changes such as marriage, divorce, or the loss of a loved one will all cause stress.

As we said, some of these occurrences may be positive, but stress will still result. The important thing is how you handle the stress that you experience. We'll be looking in more detail at some of these major causes of stress in the next chapter.

1.2 Learning to Manage Job Stress

The good thing to know about job stress is that you can learn to manage it so that it does not become a serious problem. A large majority of the ebook will deal with methods for learning to manage your stress levels. Some tools you will learn include:

- Taking responsibility for how you experience stress
- Taking steps to limit the impacts of stress on your health
- Identifying your 'stress points' or areas in which you are vulnerable to stress
- Learning to improve your interpersonal and communication skills to reduce stress in your relationships.

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2 Types and Causes of Stress

2.1 Introduction

As we mentioned in the introduction, there are positive types of stress that motivate us and drive us to improve ourselves, our relationships, and our lives. For example, when you have a child, there is positive stress around the excitement of the birth, preparing to make sure that you have taken the right parenting classes and assuring yourselves that you have done everything to keep the baby healthy. But then there is negative stress related to have a child as well: worrying about whether or not you will get enough sleep, the stress of a crying baby that can't seem to be satisfied, and the general worry that comes with being a new parent.

The positive types of stress we experience are called eustress. In work, eustress might be caused by:

- Getting a new job
- Receiving a promotion
- Winning a huge new client
- Adding new responsibilities to your position
- Being made a supervisor of others
- Being given the lead on a new project
- Earning praise from your supervisor

Yet notice that each of these sources of eustress could become distress if you don't handle the accompanying stress. For example, the excitement of the new job might wear off as you have to deal with the daily commute in rush-hour traffic. Or getting a promotion might be accompanied by some jealous feelings from colleagues. Winning a new client might mean a lot more money, but it also means more work. The point is that a motivating, positive stress can turn into a damaging, negative source of stress if you aren't prepared to manage it.

2.2 The Process of Stress

The triggers or stimuli that produce stress, positive or negative, are called stressors. The things that cause you stress may not cause stress for your colleague, boss, spouse, or friend. Just as we are each individuals, we each have an individual reaction to stimuli in our environment. However, there are certain ways that our bodies respond to these stressors that are the same.

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When a stimulus is experienced that we perceive as a source of danger, our bodies respond in a real and physical way. When a threat is perceived, whether to your body or other aspects of your well-being, the body responds with the "fight or flight" reaction. The pituitary gland releases a hormone into the bloodstream called adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) which them stimulates the adrenal glands to produce adrenaline and cortisol, known as the "stress hormones." They enable us to stay sharp and focused, speed up our reaction times, and temporarily boost our strength in case we decide we need to run – or in case we decide to stay and fight.

In time, once the danger passes, the hormones are reabsorbed and the body returns to normal. For some of us, this process happens more often than others. For example, people who are exposed to high stress situations sometimes become immune to them, like an EMT who deals with injured people in car crashes every day. They are able to respond without the same "fight or flight" reaction that someone who has never witnessed a crash would experience.

> The good news is that stress is not caused by the situation we are in, but by our reaction to the situation. If we can learn to control or moderate our reactions to stressors, we can curtail or even eliminate some of the stress in our lives.

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This is actually good news, as it shows us that stress is caused not by the situation we are in, but by our reaction to the situation. If we can learn to control or moderate our reactions to stressors, we can curtail or even eliminate some of the stress in our lives. As we'll see in Chapter 3, there are many reasons that we want to reduce stress – both in the work environment and as individuals. Before we move on to looking at the impacts stress can have on us, we'll look at some common causes of stress in our lives.

2.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In 1943, Abraham Maslow published a theory on what motivates people in his paper *A Theory of Human Motivation.* He posited that people have five levels of needs that they seek to meet. The more basic the need, the more motivated a person will be to fulfill it, and the more stress they will experience if they are unable to fulfill it. Figure 1 shows Maslow's hierarchy.

The bottom four layers of the pyramid Maslow called d-need or deficiency needs. Failure to meet these needs could result in physical harm in the case of the physiological level. Or if the next three layers of needs are not met, such as lack of security, friendship or love, and self-esteem, the body won't necessarily give physical signs of the deficiency, but the person will be upset, disconnected, anxious, or tense.

2.3.1 Level 1 – Physiological Needs

The bottom, or most important needs, are the physiological needs. These are just what they sound like – with the exception of clothing, shelter, and sexual activity, the things that our bodies need in order to keep functioning. These are the things that we will be most stressed by should we experience a lack of them. They include:

- Air
- Shelter
- Water
- Clothing
- Shelter
- Sexual Activity

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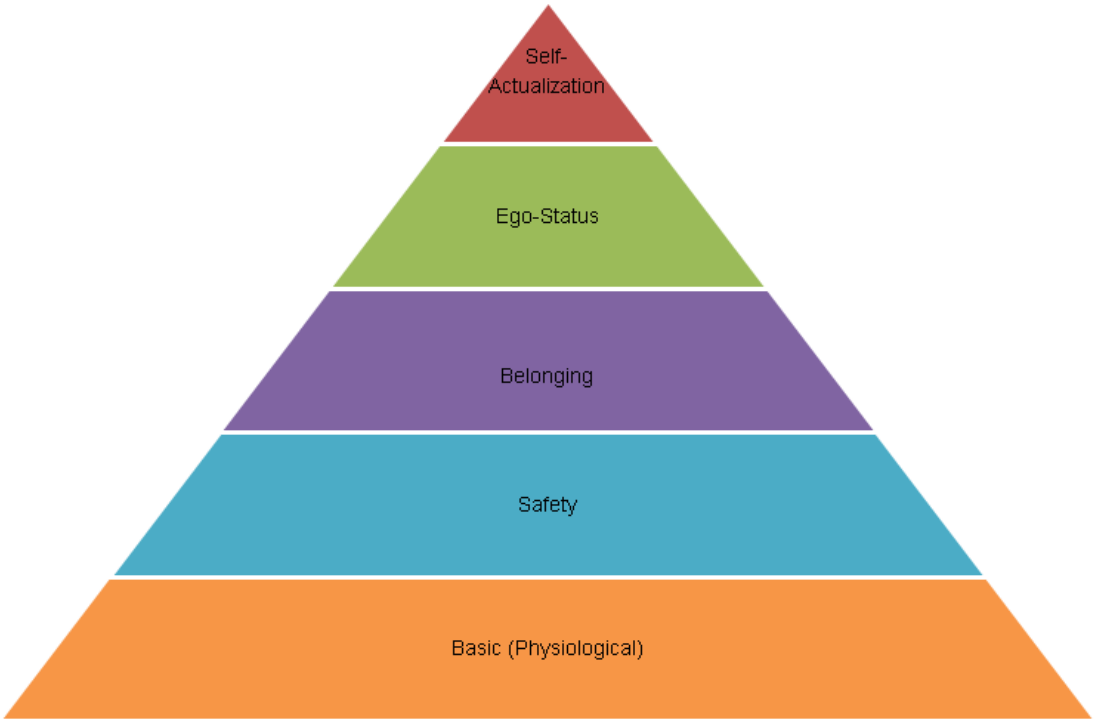

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

2.3.2 Level Two – Safety Needs

Once the physical needs have been met, the individual will then focus on making sure that they are safe. These are the things people want in order to create a certain level of predictability and order in the world. It doesn't just mean physical safety, but can also mean general health and well-being, safety from financial ruin, injustice, or having to deal with the stress of the unfamiliar. Other examples related to our professional lives include:

- Job security
- Protection from unilateral authority
- Financial savings
- Insurance policies
- Reasonable accommodations for the disabled

Safety needs are the second level of human need. Meeting these needs helps establish a sense of predictability, order, and well-being.

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2.3.3 Level Three – Belonging Needs

The third level of human needs revolve around social interactions and the need to belong. These needs will be pursued once the lower needs are met, but the lack of them will still produce stress if they are missing. People will fulfill this need by pursuing individual relationships and by joining larger social organizations. These relationships are emotionally-based and fulfill the need to be loved by, cared, for, and accepted by others.

> All human beings need to feel a sense of belonging which will be manifested in a variety of relationships – including those in the workplace.

If these needs are not met, individuals become more at risk for stress, depression, social awkwardness or anxiety, or loneliness. In some cases of extreme peer pressure, individuals may actually sacrifice the lower levels of needs in order to fit in.

People may fulfill this level of need through different relationships, such as:

- Family
- Friends
- Intimate Relationships
- Clubs or Social Organizations
- Sports Teams
- Office Culture
- Religious Groups
- Professional Organizations

2.3.4 Level Four – Ego-Status

The ego-status needs are related to the belonging needs, but with one major difference. Whereas belonging needs refer to being a part of a group, ego-status needs refer more to how the individual believes she is seen by those groups. We each have a self-image which is at least in part developed by how we believe we appear to others.

> The ego-status level of needs related to how we believe others see us and how we see ourselves.

For example, we believe we are smart, funny, kind, considerate, or any number of different attributes. We also believe that others see us that way. Our needs at this level revolve around us reinforcing our self-image and, by turn, the image others have of us. If you feel that your supervisor, colleague, client, or subordinates don't see you the way that you believe that you are, it will result in stress in those relationships.

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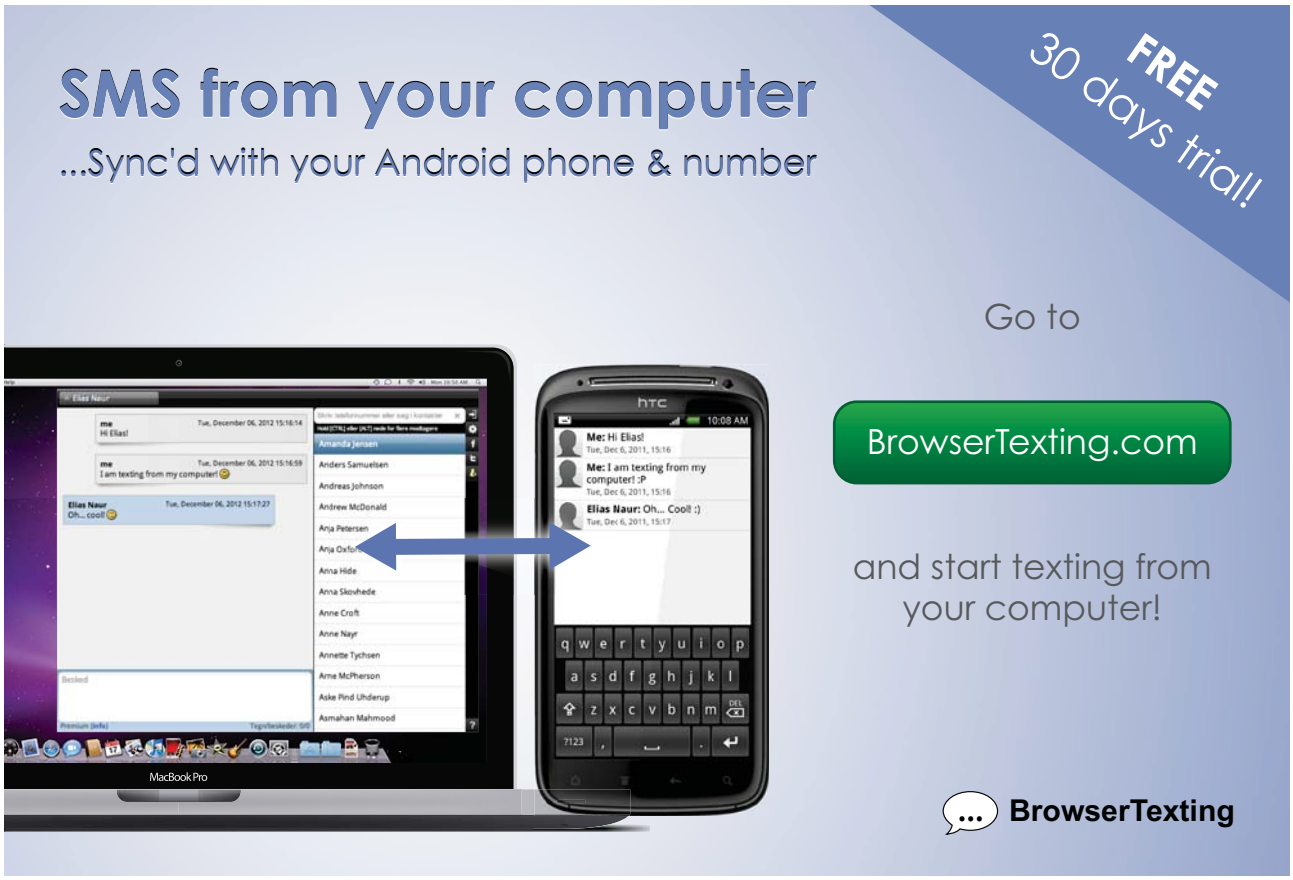
People will strive to fill this need by such means as:

- Status and achievement at work
- The accumulation of wealth
- The accumulation of 'status symbols' (cars, homes, etc.)
- Recognition from others
- Taking opportunities to lead others
- Associations with people who have the esteem of others
- Personal achievement in areas such as education, skills, and hobbies
- Pride in the achievements of their family members

Additionally, we perceive a certain 'status' that we have in our groups. This status could be could be conferred on us literally with a title, such as Director, Manager, Administrator, Chair, Treasurer, or Secretary. It could be an honorary status in the sense of being the person that others come to when they need help or advice. Or it could be that you simply have a certain level of popularity, success, or other achievement that gives you a strong sense of self-esteem and accomplishment. If these needs are not met, the individual may suffer from stressors such as low self-esteem or an inferiority complex.

We perceive a certain status that we have in our groups which could come from a formal title or from our informal interactions with others.



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Stress can be caused at this level of needs if changes at work occur such as:

- Change that increases or decreases a person's position in the company
- Change that reduces or increases the number of positions between the individual and the top leadership
- Change that reduces or increases the number of subordinate positions that report to an individual
- Changes in benefits or 'perks' received by certain groups or individuals
- Reorganization that changes the person's perceived level of power or influence
- Changes that make it more difficult (or appear to make it more difficult) to achieve the previous level of performance (and accolades)
- Any change which threatens one's ability to receive monetary, public, or other recognition (and the resulting status)
- Any change which removes the individual from the group where he held a high level of informal status

2.3.5 Level Five – Self-Actualization

Maslow described this level of human need as the desire to become more and more oneself, and to become more and more of what we are capable of becoming. This level of need is related to meeting one's full potential – whatever that might be. The exact need is very individual. For example, one person might have the need to be the perfect parent. Another individual might have the need to become athletically gifted, or another to become artistically expressive.

The need for self-actualization is the individual's need to feel as if he has reached his maximum potential. It is only possible to reach this level when the lower levels of needs have been met.

It's important to realize that this level of need is only achievable when the other four have been met. One must be physically nourished, not have to focus on safety, feel loved and a sense of belonging, and have a good level of self-esteem before he or she would seek this level of desire. Yet if a person is able to pursue this level of needs, the pursuit can cause positive stress, while failures in the pursuit will cause distress.

2.4 Additional Types of Organizational Stress

Some of what we discussed in the last section crossed over into organizational stressors. For example, if you get demoted or your perceived power in the workplace is threatening your need for self-actualization, you could say that is also an organizational stressor because it comes from a change to the organization for which you are working.

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Some other times when stress may be experienced in the workplace due to organizational stressors include:

- The organization is merging or being acquired
- There is a significant change in the way you are asked to do your job
- The structure of the organization is changing to the point that you feel you no longer have a say
- The organization is changing its focus, mission, or values
- The organization is 're-branding' itself
- A significant change is being made in benefit or compensation plans
- You are assigned to a new supervisor whose expectations you are unfamiliar with
- You have a disagreement with a colleague, your supervisor, or your subordinates

2.5 Personal Sources of Stress

As we mentioned in the introduction there are also personal sources of stress that just arise from life in general. For example, think about times that you have experienced:

- Your car breaking down
- A robbery or home invasion
- A fire or other damage to your home
- A child getting in trouble at school
- Someone you care for getting sick or injured
- The loss of a loved one
- Divorce
- Moving

These are just examples – there is literally no end to the ways that stress can arise in our lives. In the next chapter, we'll look at why we should care about managing stress, both in the workplace and outside of it.

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3 The Impacts of Stress

3.1 Introduction

Stress is an expensive problem for businesses in America. Very few workers have ever not been impacted by stress in the workplace. Some facts about the impact of stress in the American work force include:

- Those who work longer hours (a twelve hour day) increase their risk of injury and illness by 37% over those who work fewer hours.
- One study done by Northwestern National Life showed that one quarter of people interviewed consider their job the most stressful thing in their lives.
- A study by St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company showed that health complaints are more tied to problems at work than any other stressor in life
- It is estimated that 50% of absenteeism in the workplace results from stress
- It is estimated that 20% of the nation's heart disease results from stress
- The World Health Organization has predicted that by 2020 stress-related health conditions will be responsible for five of the top ten of the world's medical problems

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Stress in the workplace tends to lead to more stress. For example, if you are too stressed out at work, it will often lead to:

- Fatigue
- Reduced job performance
- Decreased job satisfaction
- Increased conflict

Which in turn, creates more stress!

In many cases, employees are unlikely to report their stress or their stressors because they believe it is unimportant and won't gain any attention from the employer. Instead, they tend to stifle their stress, which just allows it to fester and grow. The fact is that employers should be on the look-out for ways to reduce stress for their employees. What if a great deal of employee stress could be eliminated by simple changes like adding a sound-barrier wall between co-workers or making sure that your employees' chairs are correctly positioned for them at their desks? Or what if you could generate a significant reduction in stress for your staff by simply praising them sincerely when they do something well? We'll look more at what employers can do to reduce stress for their employees in the final chapter.

In many cases, employees are unlikely to report their stress or stressors because they believe it won't gain any attention from the employer.

3.2 Levels of Stress

All stress is not created equally. Stress can be mild and temporary, or it can be severe and experienced repeatedly. There are three different levels of stress, each of which often has its own types of symptoms. Stress is considered to be either acute, episodic acute, or chronic.

3.2.1 Acute Stress

Have you ever been about to fall asleep and you jerk awake suddenly? Or have you ever had a near-miss collision with an eighteen-wheeler on the interstate? What about watching your favorite team win the final match with an incredible play? Those moments of sharp, sudden stress are examples of acute stress. Luckily, these incidents are the easiest to overcome. The symptoms of acute stress are:

- Brief jump in heart rate
- Increase in blood pressure
- Possibly followed by a tension headache
- Momentarily strong emotions such as anger or fear
- Recovery is fast and normal activity is resumed

Moments of sharp, sudden stress are examples of acute stress, such as when you have a near-miss with a semi on an interstate.

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3.2.2 Episodic Acute Stress

In this situation, we seem to encounter those acute stress moments repeatedly over time. We seem to just constantly run into trouble, roadblocks, or difficult situations. Our emotions rise quickly and we seem to have raw nerves. Episodic acute stress occurs when you have multiple disasters in a short time period, such as losing your job, your house, and your good health all in the same month. Yes, the situation may be temporary, but it causes repeated episodes of acute stress before it is done.

Episodic acute stress occurs when you have multiple disasters in a short time period.

This type of stress can also arise when we have unexpressed emotions or we don't speak up about something that we think we should. If you stay in a situation where you feel undervalued or passed over for a promotion, you might feel sharp anger every time you interact with the person who did get the job. Or if you feel like you need to address someone's bad behavior but you just feel uncomfortable doing it so you delay saying something, you may feel that sharp stress whenever you talk to that person and don't say something.

Once you address what is bothering you, acute episodic stress will dissipate. But if you don't address it, it can develop into chronic stress.

Once you address what is bothering you, this type of stress will dissipate. But if you don't address it, over time it can develop into chronic stress. Some of the symptoms associated with acute episodic stress are:

- Fatigue
- Indigestion
- Recurring headaches
- Insomnia or other sleep disturbances

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3.2.3 Chronic Stress

Eventually, repeated stress becomes chronic. It becomes the normal state of being instead of an occasional occurrence. The level of stress makes it feel as if there is nothing that you can do to make it better and it can feel as if there is no way out of the situation. When you reach this level of stress, there are a number of symptoms that can be very dangerous for your health and well-being, both at work and in your personal life. These may include:

- Radical mood swings
- Severe temper
- Grinding teeth
- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Over-eating
- Alcoholism
- Tremors
- Serious, chronic physical conditions
- Depression or other mental disorders

When repeated acute stress becomes the norm, you are dealing with chronic stress.

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So how does a person move from one level or type of stress to the more serious levels of stress? One model for how we react to and progress through the stages of stress is called the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS).

3.3 General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

GAS describes the stages that the body goes through as it experiences the different levels of stress and attempts to adapt to that stress. There are three general stages that correspond to the three types of stress described in the last section. These stages are:

- Alarm – the body perceives the threat or risk and sends out the biological responses necessary to respond.
- Resistance – the body has to remain in a state of response above the level that the response mechanisms are normally able to produce and is tiring
- Exhaustion – the body can no longer resist the damaging effects of stress after chronic exposure. Response systems may stop functioning and the body is more vulnerable to the effects of stress.

General Adaptation Syndrome describes the stages the body goes through as it experiences the different levels of stress and attempts to adapt to them.

Once you are no longer able to adapt to stress, the body will be more susceptible to disease as well as emotional and psychological consequences. The longer that your body is forced to adapt, the more severe the consequences can be.

3.4 Warning Signs of Excessive Stress at Work

How can you know whether or not you are experiencing just a bad day or an excessive amount of stress? There are some warning signs, some of which we have addressed earlier in this chapter. But if you find that your feelings about work, your tasks, or the people you work with are deteriorating and that those feelings occur more than just sporadically, you may be under excessive stress and need to take some proactive steps to reduce your stress level. More warning signs of excessive stress in the workplace may include:

- Constant anxiety
- Regular irritability
- Apathy
- Loss of interest in work
- Loss of concentration
- Muscle tension
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of sex drive
- Use of alcohol or drugs to cope

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To respond to these symptoms, you need to equip yourself with tools to deal with and prevent excessive stress. We'll examine a number of such tools in the following chapters.

3.5 How You Currently Cope with Stress

Before we move on to a discussion of the tools you can use to cope with stress, it's important that you examine the tools you are already using. Are you doing things to deal with stress that are actually contributing to your problems? Or are you using healthy stress-management tools that you should keep using but just need to add to them with additional coping techniques?

> Are you doing things to deal with stress that are actually contributing to your problems?

Many of us have adopted unhealthy ways of coping with stress. They may work temporarily, but in the long run they will cause additional problems. For example, if you are a smoker, you might find the moment of smoking a cigarette to be relaxing. But eventually you'll be faced with the stress of the resulting health problems that you are likely to develop. There are many coping mechanisms that are actually delaying stress, not managing it. Additional examples include:

- Overeating
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Using drugs
- Procrastinating
- Sleeping too much
- Withdrawing from your social network
- Avoidance habits like watching TV for hours
- Lashing out at others
- Ignoring your feelings and stressors

As you learn new tools for dealing with stress, you will also want to take steps to eliminate your unhealthy coping mechanisms. It can be stressful at first to do things like giving up smoking or television, but in the end you will be better off if you can exchange these habits for healthier coping mechanisms.

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4 Self-Care Methods for Reducing Stress

4.1 Introduction

Stress causes fatigue and other symptoms which may make you just want to curl up in bed and hide when you get out of work. You may not feel that you have the time or energy to take good care of yourself. However, taking care of yourself is imperative if you want to combat stress in your life. Not only does it feel good when you are doing good things for yourself, but it is also a way to take responsibility for yourself and your actions. If you know that you can impact your stress level by exercising, eating well, and getting enough sleep, then doing so is a way to take control over a situation that might otherwise leave you feeling helpless. You can end up feeling empowered rather than overstressed. Plus, the better you feel, the better prepared you are to deal with the next stressor that comes your way.

Taking care of yourself is imperative if you want to combat stress in your life.

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4.2 Every Bit Helps

When you are looking for ways to improve your self-care, you don't have to make an entire lifestyle overhaul. Eventually, you might feel that you need to change a number of different habits in your life. But at first, even small changes can make you feel a bit better. Positive changes also tend to lead into each other. For example, if you start exercising, you are likely to want to eat better as well. And as you start to feel better, the reward of feeling good will help motivate you to keep doing more things to feel even better. So it doesn't matter where you start – you just need to pick one area and begin improving the way that you take care of yourself.

Positive changes tend to lead into each other. It doesn't matter where you start – you just need to pick one area to start taking better care of yourself.

4.3 Exercise

Besides improving your physical fitness level, exercise can also help to reduce your stress level. There are several reasons for why exercise can help you better deal with stress as well. First, exercise can lead to a release of endorphins, or 'feel-good' chemicals into the bloodstream. These chemicals have the effect of relaxing the body and are associated with feelings of pleasure.

Second, research shows that exercise may help the brain to better deal with stress. People who exercise regularly are proven to have lower anxiety and depression rates than people who don't. Scientists believe that in part, this fact is due to the relationship between neurochemicals and stress. Some of the current research is showing that Norepinephrine, a neruomodulator, is believed to help the brain deal with stress in a more effective way. Exercise is shown to increase the brain's production of norepinephrine. In fact, it appears that norepinephrine plays a role in releasing and modulating the other neurochemicals that are directly involved in the body's stress response.

Exercise may help the brain better deal with stress.

Third, there is some evidence that exercise is a way for your body to practice responding to stress. The theory is that exercise requires the same systems in the body to respond as are involved in responding to stress. For example, your cardiovascular system, renal system, and muscular system are all involved when you exercise and when you experience stress. It is possible that exercise is a kind of 'dress rehearsal' for these systems to practice working together. If this theory is accurate, then it makes sense that the more sedentary we are, the less able our bodies are to respond to significant stress.

There is evidence that exercise is actually a way for your body to practice responding to stress because it uses the same body systems as those that are stimulated while you are under stress.

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So how much exercise is enough to lift your mood and give your body the practice time that it needs? The general consensus is that our bodies need a minimum of 30 minutes of heart-pounding activity on most days. The activity doesn't have to take place all at one time. Instead, you can break it up into two fifteen minute segments or three ten minute segments.

4.4 Healthy Eating

Providing your body with appropriate nutrition is important for making the body run efficiently – including the body's ability to respond to stress. One important step is to keep your blood sugar at an even level throughout the day. Low blood sugar can lead to anxiety and irritability, while high blood sugar will lead to a crash that can result in low energy and fatigue. Following are some general tips for healthy eating.

Providing your body with proper nutrition helps it respond more efficiently, including to stress.

4.4.1 Plan for Success

Make sure that your eating plan is just that – a well thought-out plan. You should make changes gradually so that you don't overwhelm yourself and get frustrated or attempt to abandon your plan soon after you've started. Keep your plan simple so that it is easy to follow. Don't drive yourself crazy counting calories or every nutritional aspect of the food you are eating. Instead, focus on making healthy choices and enjoying foods you like in moderation.

4.4.2 How You Eat

Besides what you eat, you want to think about how you eat as well. If you eat too fast, eat beyond the point of satisfaction, or eat on the run, you are engaging in poor eating habits – no matter what food choices you are making. Here are some suggestions for healthy eating behaviors:

- Try to eat with other people rather than in front of the television or computer. That way you are focusing on others and enjoying their company rather than mindlessly eating.
- Chew your food thoroughly and slowly, giving yourself the time to enjoy the tastes and flavors of your food. If you have a hard time doing this, then try putting your fork down between bites.
- Sometimes we aren't able to distinguish true hunger. Before you eat, try drinking a glass of water. You might actually have been thirsty rather than hungry. Pay attention to when you reach the point of being satisfied with the amount of food you have eaten. In fact, try to stop before you reach true fullness.

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4.4.3 Fruits and Vegetables

Yes, we've all heard it before. We need to include a variety of fruits and vegetables in our diets in order to receive adequate nutrition for our body's needs. Additionally, they are low in calories, high in fiber, and rich in antioxidants. So in addition to helping you to remain well-nourished and ready to fight off stress, fruits and vegetables can also directly help to protect you from diseases such as cancer. Some tips for adding fruits and vegetables to your diet are:

- Pick bright, deeply colored produce and be sure to pick an array of different colors in order to get a variety of nutrients
- Eat naturally sweet fruits and vegetables if you have a sweet tooth, which can help to reduce your cravings for sugar.
- Avoid fruit juices or at least dilute them with water
- Avoid fruits canned in syrup, which is just a form of sugar
- Avoid fried vegetables and fatty sauces

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4.4.4 Additional Nutritional Tips

In addition to the information above, there are some more things you can do to improve your nutrition and overall health. They include:

- Drinking at least eight glasses of water per day. Our bodies are about 75% water and we need it to keep our systems running properly.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages or take them in moderation.
- Eat whole grains and avoid simple carbohydrates.
- Avoid unhealthy fats such as saturated fats and trans fats.
- Eat lean protein such as fish, poultry, and vegetable proteins.
- Add calcium and Vitamin D to keep bones strong.
- Limit salt and sodium to 2,300 mg per day.
- Avoid processed or pre-packaged foods that are full of additives and preservatives.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.
- Eliminate nicotine.

4.5 Get Plenty of Sleep

Getting enough rest is vital to controlling the impact that stress has on your health. Everyone's sleep cycle is slightly different, but most adults require seven to eight hours of restful sleep per night. Stress and anxiety often interfere with sleep, which in turn will worsen the person's level of stress. Lack of sleep affects your ability to manage your stress level, while getting enough sleep leaves you refreshed and more able to cope with your job and any stressors that you might face.

Lack of sleep affects your ability to manage your stress level.

If you find that you have trouble with insomnia, there are several tools that you could try to help fall asleep. These include:

- Meditation
- Breathing exercises
- A soothing cup of herbal tea
- Listening to music
- Taking a bath
- Reading

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Things to avoid if you want to be able to sleep well include:

- Nicotine or caffeine after the afternoon
- Exercising at night
- Television in the bedroom
- Eating in bed
- Work or other stressful activities in bed

If you have problems getting to sleep, the goal should be to transform your bedroom into a refuge. You can train your body to expect sleep when you climb into bed if you limit your activities in the bedroom to those conducive to sleep.

4.6 Changing Your Focus

For many of us, our daily job becomes our daily grind. Work can seem to overwhelm the day and the week if we aren't careful. That makes sense when you consider the fact that most of us are either getting ready for work or commuting to work for much longer than just the eight hours a day that we are paid for. But if we can learn to 'turn off' work outside of work hours and concentrate on life in those off hours, we can do a great deal to manage our stress levels. Here are some suggestions on how to help you change your focus from work back to your life:

- When you get ready in the mornings, treat that time as preparation for your day, not just for work.
- During your commute, do something just for yourself and not work related. If you are driving, listen to some favorite music or a book on CD. If you are taking the train, read a novel or do a crossword puzzle.
- Take the breaks that you are allowed to take. Use the time to relax and be sure that you don't think or talk about work.
- Drink plenty of hydrating liquid during the day. Dehydration is a common reason that people feel fatigued.
- Consciously leave work behind at work and use the commute home to transition back to your life. Make it a general rule that you won't talk about work problems at home. Instead, focus on your family, friends, or outside interests.

If we can learn to 'turn off' work outside of work hours and concentrate on life in those off hours, we can do a great deal to manage our stress levels.

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4.7 Plan for Relaxation

For many of us, relaxation doesn't just happen. We come home from work to a busy household, chores to do, or children who need help with homework and preparation for bed. However, you can fight stress by treating relaxation as a necessary and vital part of every day. Just like you make time in the day to brush your teeth or fix a meal for your family, you should plan some form of relaxation into every day.

You can fight stress by treating relaxation as a necessary and vital part of every day. The small amount of time that it takes to nurture yourself every day will be repaid to you in a calmer outlook and a more productive work day.

By nurturing yourself in some way every day, you can recharge your emotional and physical stress defenses. The small amount of time that it takes to nurture yourself every day will be repaid to you in a calmer outlook and a more productive work day.

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You don't have to spend an hour every day relaxing, either. For some of us, that is simply not possible. However, you should plan something every day that is fun, relaxing, and just for you. Some examples include:

- Going for a walk around the block
- Playing with your pets
- Listening to music
- Singing or dancing
- Taking a bath
- Getting a massage
- Watching a TV comedy
- Reading an enjoyable book
- Having a conversation with a friend
- Daydreaming

You can come up with your own list of activities that you consider nurturing – it will be different for different people. Then plan some variety of those activities into your life as often as possible.

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5 Reducing Stress through Time Management

5.1 Introduction

How much of your stress is due to time – or lack thereof? Here's a brief exercise to try which can give you an idea of whether or not time management might be an issue for you. First, on a sheet of paper, draw a line down the middle. On the left-hand side, list at least five things that are the most important to you. Start with the most important, and continue the list in order. List people, things, ideals, activities – whatever it is that is very important to you and to your personal happiness. For example, a list might look like this:

- Family
- Health
- Integrity
- Friends
- Work
- Church
- Pets
- Reading

Now on the right-hand side, list all the things that you spend your time on, starting with what you spend most of your time on and continuing on down to what you spend the least time on. This list might look like this:

- Work
- Family
- Sleeping
- Errands
- Housework
- Helping kids with homework
- Friends
- Church

You've probably figured out the point of the exercise by now. Most of us don't have the luxury of spending the majority of our time on the things that are most important to us. For every item that we are not spending what we would consider to be enough time on, we will experience some form of stress over that fact. When things are very important to us and we are not able to dedicate any time to those things at all, that is very stressful as well.

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However, successful time management will help you to become more effective in completing the tasks that you have to complete so that there is more time available for you to spend on the things that are important to you. This isn't necessarily always an easy feat; in some cases, it would take significant changes for you to spend time on the things that are important to you.

Successful time management will help you to become more effective in completing the tasks that you have to complete so there is more time available for you to spend on the things that are important to you.

For example, if you currently don't have children but want them very much, deciding to have a child is a significant, life-altering decision that demands that you restructure your time accordingly. But at the same time, many things that we want to do can be accommodated if we simply learn to use our time more wisely by applying some effective time management techniques. Doing so will make us happier and more balanced so that we are less susceptible to stressors and so that we have healthy means of dealing with stress at our disposal.

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Time management also helps you have a greater sense of control over your life – both at work and at home. When you feel as if you are in control of your time, you feel empowered and confident. Then when something arises that you were not prepared for, you're more likely to be able to deal with it productively rather than getting stopped by it.

Time management helps you have a greater sense of control over your life – both at work and at home.

5.2 Creating a Schedule

If you are someone who feels that schedules are restrictive, then you haven't yet learned the power that they can provide. We live in a world where there is always something jockeying for our attention and our time. For you to be able to fit in the things that are important to you, a schedule is an important tool. It allows you to block out segments of time and assign them to a specific activity. At work, a schedule offers additional benefits because it allows you to:

- Ensure you've allotted time for all of your necessary tasks and functions
- Cut off unproductive interruptions by referring to it
- Limit meetings to their scheduled time rather than letting them go on until people feel like leaving
- Demonstrate that your plate is full if the boss inquires whether you have time to take on additional work
- Allot time for yourself for breaks

If you are someone who feels that schedules are restrictive, then you haven't yet learned the power they can provide

At home, a schedule can help you prevent any wasted time in exchange for making time for the things that you like to do. For example, how many times have you sat down in front of the television intending to just watch it while you folded laundry or ate dinner, only to find that you're still sitting there several hours later? If you are intentional with your time scheduling, you can instead have a purpose for your time – a purpose that is important to you.

If you are intentional with your time scheduling, you can have a purpose for your time – a purpose that is important to you.

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Look back at your list of things that are important to you. Let's imagine you had on your list that it's important to you to write a novel. Why not schedule writing time into your week? Instead of watching that television program you don't really care about or reading that magazine that you just happen to have sitting around, you can schedule one hour or more that you are committing that you will dedicate to your novel writing.

Once you've scheduled in time for the things that are important to you, you need to treat those appointments with or for yourself as if they are just as important as your work meetings or doctor appointments. It can take practice to train yourself to do this – and perhaps to train your family or friends to accept this new habit. But when you are making time for what is important to you, you will be happier overall. You will then be a better spouse, parent, employee, and friend. And you will be better able to handle stressors when you are happier as well.

When you are making time for what is important to you, you will be happier overall. You will then be a better spouse, parent, employee and friend.

5.3 Managing Tasks at Work

Scheduling activities will also help you with your work, of course, particularly if there are certain items that you never seem to find the time to do or items that you seem to put off doing time and again. But there are other tools that you can use to help decrease your stress level at work while managing your time.

5.3.1 The Difference between Urgent and Important

We've all had it happen. We're having a good day, getting our work done, when someone calls or rushes into the office in a hurry. They have a fire on their hands and they want your help in putting it out. You feel the need to drop what you're doing and dedicate your time to helping them with the latest crisis. You have to be a team player, right? And if the person asking for help is your boss, do you really have a choice?

Well, remember, we defined stress as a factor of how we react to a situation rather than the situation itself. So how do you normally react to this scenario? What other possible responses could you have? One solution is to determine the level of importance of the situation – not just the level of urgency. This idea can be explained by the chart in Figure 2. You'll see that the chart is divided into four quadrants based on whether or not it is important and whether or not it is urgent.

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	Important	Not Important
Urgent	**QUADRANT I**	**QUADRANT II**
Not Urgent	**QUADRANT III**	**QUADRANT IV**

Figure 2: Important vs. Urgent

Looking at the figure above, in which quadrant would we ideally spend the majority of our workdays? In order to have the greatest job satisfaction and the least amount of stress, we would spend the majority of our time in Quadrant III. In this quadrant, we are not harried by urgent, pressing matters, but we are working on things that are important to the organization. We are able to make progress and move forward, feeling at the end of the day that we have accomplished a great deal.

> In order to have the greatest job satisfaction and the least amount of stress, we would ideally spend the majority of our time in Quadrant III.

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That's the ideal world. But where do we spend the most of our time in the real world? If you are constantly responding to the crises of others – even when they don't actually have an impact on your own work or work product, then you are in Quadrant II. Everything feels urgent, but it's not actually important. If you spend your day doing busy work, then you are focused in Quadrant IV, where things are not urgent and are not important. This can be a frustrating experience because you may not be able to feel as if you have contributed something of value at the end of the day. These could be distractions as well, such as talking to colleagues, surfing the internet, or other time wasters.

Quadrant I situations could provoke a high stress response because whatever is at stake is actually very important to our own job or work product and it happens to be urgent as well.

All of us are going to spend time in Quadrant I eventually. These are the situations that could provoke a high stress response because whatever is at stake is actually very important to our own job or work product, and it happens to be urgent as well. What you want to learn to do is to distinguish these true emergency situations from situations that seem urgent but just aren't that important. Before you drop everything next time, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this truly important or just urgent to the person requesting my help?
- What will the consequences be if I don't handle this immediately?
- Do I actually have important and urgent things that should be done instead?
- Is there someone else that can handle this situation?

If you determine that the request for your action is actually not both urgent and important, then chances are there is someone better suited to handle the request. If you are receiving the request from your supervisor, you can ask her what she would rather that you focus on – the item that is both urgent and important, or the item that she has brought to you. Reminding her that you have other important work to do and that it will have to wait if you respond to her urgent request, it might have her reassign the request – or it might not. But at least you know that you are applying your efforts to exactly the activity that she wants you to handle at that time, reducing the need for you to feel stressed out about your work load.

Reminding a supervisor that you have other important work to do – even if it's not urgent – might have her reassign the assignment to someone else.

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5.3.2 Prioritize Tasks

When you have a number of tasks that need to be completed, one way of categorizing them is to determine whether they are urgent or important or both. Another way is to prioritize the tasks you need to get done based on what you believe to be the most important first and then work your way down to the least important. Of course, sometimes there are other factors to consider. For example, you might need to evaluate:

- Budget issues – if you don't have the needed funds it may be a moot point
- Time it will take to complete it
- Availability of others who need to have input
- Availability of other resources (information, personnel, equipment, etc.) you need to get the job done

If you have a task that you consider to be unpleasant, it is often easier to get that task out of the way first. Otherwise you can spend a great deal of time procrastinating and not getting any work done. Instead, get these tasks done early in the day so you can put them behind you and get on with the next tasks.

Once you have determined the priority of each item, complete the highest priority items first. If you find that you cannot finish everything on your task list, carry the items over to the next day's list, evaluating the entire new list as a whole before determining what to do next. The oldest task on your list isn't necessarily going to be a priority – but it might become one as time goes on and a deadline draws near.

You can also use prioritizing when you are faced with a complex project that seems overwhelming. You can break a large project into small steps so that you understand what needs to be done first, what might be dependent on another task, and which steps you can afford to put off in favor of higher priority items.

5.3.3 Delegate, Delegate, Delegate

Many of us are guilty of trying to do everything on our own. It may be because we feel that it would be faster just to do it ourselves than to try to explain how to do it to someone else. Or maybe we are concerned that no one else will do as good a job as we would. However, none of us has endless time and endless energy. Trying to control everything on our own is a sure way to increase our own stress level. If we can delegate tasks to other people, why not do it?

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There are a number of benefits to you, to the person that you delegate your tasks to, and to the organization as a whole when you learn how to properly delegate. The benefits for you include:

- Reduced stress
- Additional time to dedicate to tasks that you truly need to work on yourself
- Practicing the skill of effective delegation

Benefits for the other person include:

- The opportunity to learn something new
- The chance to feel useful and part of the team
- The chance to show you what they can do and earn accolades for that achievement

And finally, benefits for the organization include:

- Having more than one person who knows how to perform the given task
- Adding a new perspective to a situation
- Having employees that are less stressed due to sharing their work duties

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6 Improving Emotional Intelligence to Reduce Workplace Stress

6.1 Introduction

Since we know that stress is the result of our reaction to a stressor, it makes sense that we should attempt to control that reaction with whatever tools we have available. Emotional intelligence is one such tool. It is the ability to use your emotions as information about what you are experiencing and then deciding to use that information in a constructive way. Emotional intelligence, or EI, helps you understand why you respond the way you do and how you can affect those responses. The more you learn to use EI, the better you will be at dealing with stressful situations, communicating with others and overcoming emotional roadblocks.

6.2 EI at Work

The most commonly used and widely accepted model of EI was posited by Daniel Goleman. It involves a range of four competencies which are broken down into skill sets and which together form the picture of a person's level of EI. Figure 3 outlines Goleman's model.

Goleman's EI Competencies

Self Awareness: Knowing how we feel in the moment and using our gut feelings to help drive decision making; having a realistic understanding of our own abilities and a strong sense of self-confidence.

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Accurate Self-Assessment
- Self-Confidence

Self Management: Handling our own emotions so that they don't interfere but facilitate; having the ability to delay gratification in pursuit of a goal; recovering well from emotional distress; translating our deepest, truest preferences into action in order to improve and succeed.

- Self-Control
- Trustworthiness
- Conscientiousness
- Adaptability
- Achievement Orientation
- Initiative

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Social Awareness: Sensing what others are feeling; being able to understand situations from others' perspective; cultivating relationships with a diverse range of people.

- Empathy
- Organizational Awareness
- Service Orientation

Social Skills: Handling emotions in respect to relationships with other people; able to read the intricacies of social interactions; able to interact in social situations well; able to use this skill set to influence, persuade, negotiate, and lead.

- Influence
- Leadership
- Developing Others
- Communication
- Change Catalyst
- Conflict Management
- Building Bonds
- Teamwork and Collaboration

Figure 3: Goleman's EI Competencies

6.2.1 Increasing Self-Awareness

Becoming aware of your emotions takes practice. At first, you may have a hard time identifying the specific emotions that you are feeling. But your ability to note what you are feeling will increase in time. Here are several suggestions for helping to increase your self-awareness.

1. "Check-in" with yourself.

To begin to identify your emotions, you'll need to make time for doing so. Schedule particular times in the day that you can be alone and calm. Perhaps first thing in the morning, lunch time, and bed time would be good times to start. At first, you will do this at these regularly scheduled times in order to get in the habit of flexing your 'identifying' muscle. Eventually, you will be able to call on the skill anytime that you feel a strong, distressing, or other emotion.

Sit quietly and if possible, close your eyes. Ask yourself several questions, and be sure to answer them honestly. There is no right or wrong answer. Just listen to your responses. Suggestions for questions to ask are:

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- How am I feeling?
- What am I feeling?
- How long have I been feeling this way?
- Where do I notice the feeling manifesting itself in my body? Am I tense, clenching my teeth, feeling tired; do I have a headache or a stomachache?

2. Label your emotions.

Once you are able to tell how you are feeling, you will want to be able to identify what started your negative feelings. Was there a particular 'trigger'? As you get better at identifying your emotions, you can come up with your own labels for them. Remember that not all emotions are negative – practice recognizing and labeling the positive ones too.

Some suggestions for labels might be single words like anger, joy, fear, or sadness. Or you can give shades of meaning to your labels by using phrases like 'fed up,' 'tired and worn out,' or whatever rings truest for you. Here are some questions to ask yourself to help identify your triggers:

- When did the feeling first start?
- What was happening when the feeling started?
- Has the strength of the emotion changed at all? How?

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3. Be in the moment.

Try to 'hear' your emotions as they happen. What are they telling you? We've probably all experienced our emotions as warnings, say when we are walking alone in an unfamiliar area of town or when a rough looking character approaches us on the street. Our nervousness is the body's way of putting us on alert to possible danger. Maybe you've experienced it and called it intuition or instinct – but this same emotional response happens in other areas of our lives as well.

For example, if you agree to go to take on a challenging new project at work but you suddenly feel angry or irritated, what does that tell you? You might really be feeling that you are taking on more than your share of work and you need to speak to revisit the decision to accept the project.

Try to verbalize the emotion. For example, you might think, 'ok, I am feeling really angry right now. I can feel it in my stomach and my back. What is the anger trying to tell me?' If you learn to notice your emotions as they happen and you will be able to get better at connection emotions to their causes. In other words, acknowledging your emotions as they occur gives you more opportunities to learn about yourself.

4. Get to the 'Root' of the emotion.

You've identified your emotion with a label, and you are exploring what the emotion is trying to tell you. But you need to make sure that you are dealing with the full emotional story. Often we feel an emotion that is only the 'tip' of everything that we are feeling.

For example, imagine you are feeling angry. What's underneath that anger? Are you angry because you feel vulnerable or out of control? Are you angry because someone has made you look bad and you think others will laugh at you? Are you angry because you accepted that work assignment even though you really didn't want to?

All of these 'roots' of your anger are different, but the resulting emotion is the same. So you will need to be willing to look beyond the initial emotion and explore what else you might be feeling in order to be able to manage your emotions. Otherwise you'll be addressing a symptom, not the root cause.

It's important to note that we don't always feel only one emotion at a time. It's possible to feel many things at once, and even for some of them to seem as if they are conflicting. But every emotion that you feel is there for a reason. Take the time to identify and acknowledge each one in order to get the most information from what you are feeling.

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Remember that we often feel more than one emotion at a time. But each one of them offers information we can learn about ourselves.

6.2.2 Self-Management

Self-Management is also referred to in some EI models as self-regulation. It refers to the act of taking responsibility for our emotions. When we take responsibility for the way we feel, it gives us a tool for making decisions that are the most supportive for our mental and emotional health. That in turn helps us be successful in motivating ourselves to achieve our goals. It helps us to overcome stumbling blocks and remain in action towards the things that we want in life. It lets us experience emotions without being controlled by them and it aids in our ability to build strong, lasting, and rewarding relationships – both in and out of the workplace.

Self-Management, or self-regulation, refers to the act of taking responsibility for our emotions and how they impact our decisions and behaviors.

The competency of self-management has six different skill attributes:

- Self-Control
- Trustworthiness
- Conscientiousness
- Adaptability
- Achievement Orientation
- Initiative

6.2.3 Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to perceive and understand the social relationships and structures in which you and those around you are operating. It involves being able to understand how other people are feeling – and validating those feelings. It requires being able to recognize relationships and structures within your organization or your social networks. And it means understanding that individual happiness is dependent upon assisting others to achieve their own happiness as well.

Social awareness is the ability to perceive and understand the social relationships and structures in which you and those around you are operating.

The three skills comprising this competency are:

- Empathy
- Organizational Awareness
- Service Orientation

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6.2.4 Relationship Skills

Whereas social awareness is the competency through which you become aware of emotions of others, how the organizational structure can affect them, and how you can have an impact on their feelings through service orientation, social skills are those that you have access to when participating in relationships with others. You could say that if social awareness offers understanding of others, social skills offer means of interacting with others that help boost productivity, improve relationships, and increase your general quality of life.

> Social skills offer means of interacting with others in ways that help boost productivity, improve relationships, and increase your general quality of life.

Social skills can also be called 'people skills'. People who have high levels of this competency are:

- Easy to talk to
- Good team players
- Good at resolving disputes
- Excellent communicators
- Focused on helping others
- Skilled at building relationships

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There are eight skills that are associated with EI social skills. These are:

- Influence
- Leadership
- Developing Others
- Communication
- Change Catalyst
- Conflict Management
- Building Bonds
- Teamwork and Collaboration

6.3 Reducing Stress Using EI

Now that you understand what EI is and what factors are involved, you can learn to apply the information at the workplace in order to help reduce your stress. These skills can take time to learn and develop, but they can be very powerful once you are in the practice of using them. Some suggestions for practicing your new EI competencies include:

- Practice recognizing your particular stress responses and what emotions signify that you are being affected by stress
- Realize that your emotions are information about what you need to do to help yourself during a stressful situation
- Acknowledge your emotions, but know that you don't have to be ruled by them
- Concentrate on communicating through your nonverbal means (tone of voice, gestures, body language) as well as with words
- Practice using humor as a way to fight against stress and diffuse stressful situations in groups

These skills can take time to learn and develop, but they can be very powerful once you are in the practice of using them.

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7 Further Methods for Reducing Workplace Stress

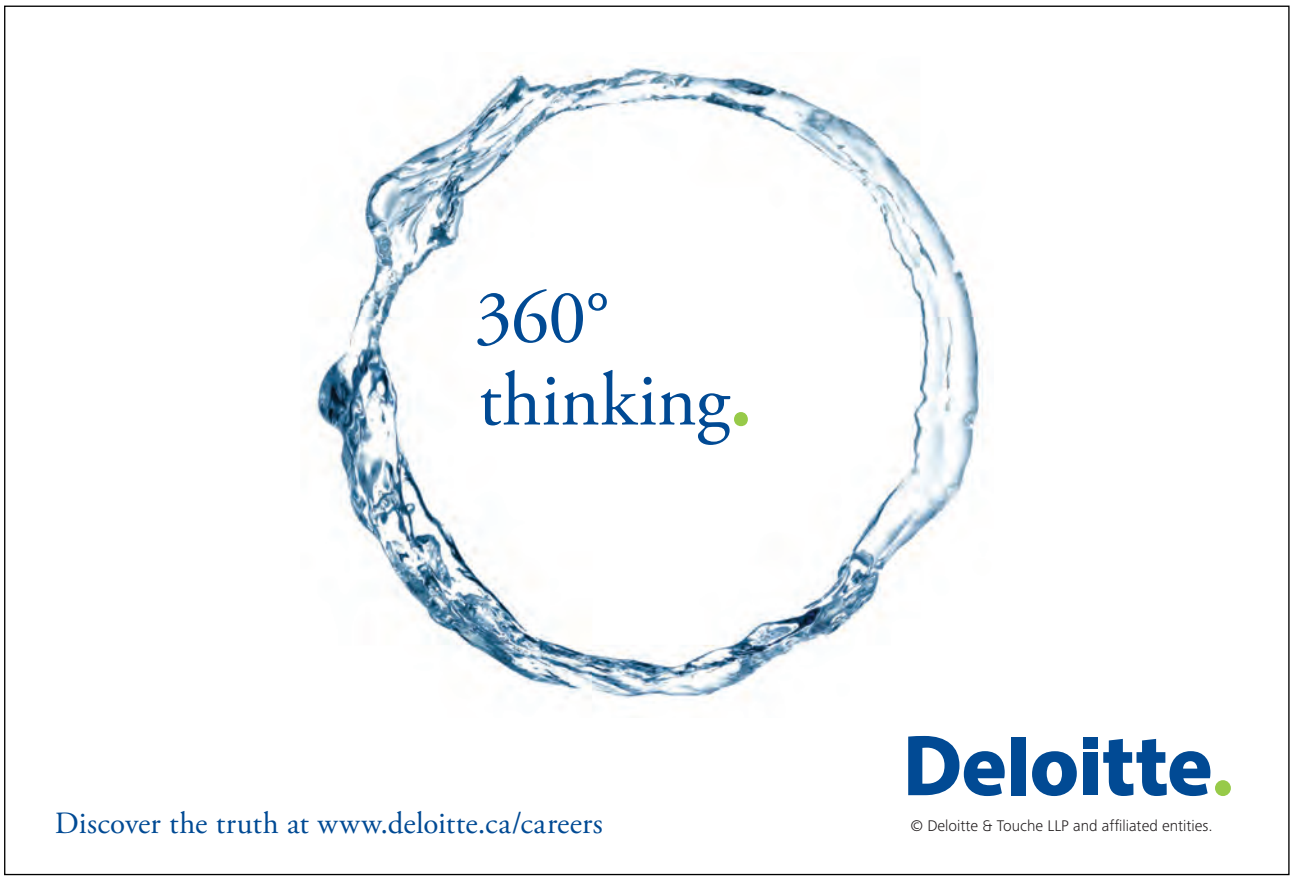
7.1 Introduction

If we acknowledge and accept that we are all responsible for our stress levels and for the way that we respond to stressful situations, it actually gives us a great deal of power. Once we are willing to be accountable for our own stress, we gain access to nearly endless ways to combat it. It requires that we examine our own habits for ways that our behavior may be contributing to our stress or to the stress of others and then take the actions necessary to improve those behaviors.

7.2 Additional Tips for Employees

Let's first look at what any employee can do to help manage stress in the workplace. Some tips for reducing stress in your work environment that may be related to your own behavior include:

- **Forget perfection.** Those of us who strive for perfection in everything we do are asking for stress. Nothing will ever be completely perfect, and by putting unrealistic pressure on ourselves or others, we are guaranteeing that we will experience or inflict stress.



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- **Take responsibility for your commitments.** Are you always running late to work? Do you tend to oversleep or forget things? Make a commitment to yourself to take the actions necessary to correct these stress-causing behaviors. Buy a second alarm clock, adapt a calendar system that works for you, and plan extra time for completing tasks or getting to appointments.
- **Stop stinking thinking.** Watch out for negative talk, negative thoughts, and unconstructive criticism – both of yourself and of others. Try to stay positive about your work and your accomplishments and acknowledge others for their contributions instead of concentrating on their shortcomings.
- **Know when to walk away.** Feel that fuse getting shorter and your temper rising? Take responsibility for your own well being by knowing when to walk away and take a break. Spend a few moments calming yourself before you return to the situation with a clear head and an open mind.

7.3 Additional Tips for Employers or Supervisors

We know that a low-stress workplace is a happier, healthier, more productive workplace, so it's in the best interest of employers and organizations to take steps to help lower the stress level in the office.

Some suggestions include:

- Work to improve communication. Employees can have very creative imaginations. They may be concerned about their work quality, performance, or their role and how you want them to perform. But you can reassure them by keeping communication open with your employees and letting them know where they stand. Be clear about your expectations and praise them when they do well or explain why and how they can improve.
- Consider your employees. When you can, let employees have a say in decisions that will affect them or their jobs. Do what you can to accommodate their needs, preferences, and concerns. Try to match the jobs you give to employees with their skills so that they feel comfortable and confident. If you do decide to challenge them to step outside of their comfort zone, be sure that you have given them the tools and resources they need to be successful.
- Offer incentives or rewards. Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool. By providing rewards and incentives you are giving your employees clear signals about what they need to do to be considered successful in their jobs. Offer training opportunities and chances for career advancement to show that you value employees and their contributions.
- Foster a team environment. Recognize that your employees may spend more time with each other than with their own families. Allow opportunities for them to interact socially and build bonds. Encourage them to support each other and learn from each other.

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